

Charter: Sustainable Transportation Advisory Council (STAC)

Climate change is impacting Minnesota and transportation is the #1 source of carbon pollution

Climate change is an existential threat. If Washington won't lead on it, Minnesota will. Minnesota's future is in the green economy. - Governor Tim Walz

The United Nation's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)¹ found that if greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions continue at the current rate, the atmosphere will warm by up to 2.7° Fahrenheit (1.5° Celsius) by 2040, inundating coastlines, intensifying droughts and poverty, and increasing global insecurity. The report concluded that if we keep burning fossil fuels like we have been, temperatures could rise by more than 3° Fahrenheit, which would be catastrophic globally given how interdependent the world's nations and economies have become.

The 2018 US National Climate Assessment² reinforced the IPCC report and found that at-risk communities in the Midwest are more vulnerable to climate change impacts, including tribal nations because of their reliance on threatened natural resources and communities of color in the urban core due to urban heat island effects, exposure to air pollution, and health disparities that increase community vulnerabilities.

For Minnesota, climate change means more flooding and problems with infrastructure. For rural Minnesota, climate change could hurt farmers as heavy rain erodes soil and make it tougher to plant crops or do field work³.

Climate change is already impacting Minnesota and those impacts are projected to increase in the future. The state is getting warmer and wetter, with more varied temperatures and precipitation, and more frequent extreme weather events that will further stress our transportation system, impact how people travel, and increase the cost of building, operating, and maintaining transportation infrastructure.

When the Next Generation Energy Act (NGEA) became state law in 2007, electricity generation was the largest source of carbon pollution. The combination of state and national policy and the reduced costs of lower-carbon energy sources have led to dramatic decreases in emissions from electricity generation and the sector is on track to meet year 2025 carbon reduction targets five years early.

Transportation is a different story. Transportation is the #1 source of carbon pollution nationally and became the largest source of GHG emissions in Minnesota in 2016. The transportation sector is not on track to meet future NGEA emission targets. While transportation emissions in Minnesota decreased 8%

¹ Climate Overview – IPCC Report (<https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>), October 2018

² <https://nca2014.globalchange.gov/>

³ <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2017/10/13/wet-autumn-tests-farmers-delays-harvest>



overall from 2005 to 2016, they have increased annually since 2015, as people buy more trucks and sport utility vehicles (SUVs) and drive more miles each year. Without targeted efforts to reduce carbon pollution from transportation, emissions will continue increasing, especially as federal policy weakens vehicle efficiency regulations⁴.

The transportation sector is changing rapidly. Connected and automated vehicles; biofuels; vehicle electrification; shared mobility; public expectations for connecting transportation and health, climate change, and equity; and other internal and external factors will influence how Minnesota invests, plans, and develops transportation projects and systems.

There is an opportunity for Minnesota to leverage our history of collaboration and science-based policy making to build new connections with existing and nontraditional partners from the public, private, nonprofit, and philanthropic sectors to maximize benefits from the changing transportation landscape to reduce carbon pollution, while also promoting equity, environmental justice, and economic development.

Purpose of the STAC

The STAC advises MnDOT and provides the agency with recommendations for reducing carbon pollution from transportation, consistent with the MnDOT statutory goals outlined in 174.01, including the following:

- 10) ensure that the planning and implementation of all modes of transportation are consistent with the environmental and energy goals of the state
- 11) promote and increase the use of high-occupancy vehicles and low-emission vehicles
- 13) increase use of transit as a percentage of all trips statewide by giving highest priority to the transportation modes with the greatest people-moving capacity and lowest long-term economic and environmental cost
- 14) promote and increase bicycling and walking as a percentage of all trips as energy-efficient, nonpolluting, and healthy forms of transportation
- 15) reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the state's transportation sector
- 16) accomplish these goals with minimal impact on the environment

Need for the STAC

Minnesota is currently not on track to meet NGEA targets for reducing emissions from the transportation sector in 2025 or 2050. While MnDOT is the principal agency of the state for development, implementation, administration, consolidation, and coordination of state transportation policies, plans, and programs, a broad collation of stakeholders is needed to help the agency make progress towards achieving the multimodal vision and agency statutory goals for a low carbon transportation system.

⁴ Effective November 26, 2019, The Trump Administration proposed new and amended greenhouse gas (GHG) and Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standards for model year 2021 to 2026 light duty vehicles.

Goal of the STAC

The STAC will help Minnesota transition to a low-carbon transportation system in a way that is consistent with statutory goals for energy and emissions reductions and maximizes benefits to Minnesota, while recognizing the importance of continued work towards improving safety, reducing inequities, and supporting economic development.

To avoid the most severe impacts of climate change, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Reports in 2019 called for a 50% reduction in carbon emissions by 2035 and a zero-carbon future by 2050; more stringent than goals in the NGEA. Recommendations from the STAC should also evaluate net-zero carbon solutions that do not disproportionately impact frontline communities.

Scope of the STAC

The full breadth of transportation activities in Minnesota may be reviewed, including those where MnDOT has direct responsibility and indirect influence. This includes, but is not limited to, system/network planning, project design, construction, operations, maintenance of transportation infrastructure, and engagement, education, and outreach.

Organization of the STAC

The STAC includes approximately 17 members appointed by the MnDOT Commissioner and additional ex-officio members from partner agencies and the legislature.

The council will submit an annual report to MnDOT by December 1 each year. The report describes the actions taken by the STAC during the previous year and any specific recommendations for MnDOT. MnDOT will have 90 days to respond to each recommendation in the report.

Co-Chairs

The MnDOT Commissioner is the co-chair of the STAC⁵. Christopher Clark, President of Xcel Energy MN, SD, ND, is the other co-chair. The MnDOT Assistant Commissioner for Sustainability may serve as a proxy in the absence of the MnDOT Commissioner.

Members

Members are appointed by the MnDOT Commissioner to provide recommendations to the agency that support the STAC goals, including through development of an annual report. STAC members serve a two-year term and can serve consecutive terms at the discretion of the MnDOT Commissioner. Members are expected to annually attend at least 80% of the STAC meetings, or 5 of the 6 planned meetings each year. Members vote and approve formal recommendations of the STAC to MnDOT.

⁵ 174.02 Commissioner's Powers and Duties. Subd. 1a. (3) minimize the degradation of air, water quality, and the climate, including reduction in greenhouse gas emissions;

Ex officio members

Ex officio members are appointed by the MnDOT Commissioner to provide expertise and may help present recommendations to the STAC. Ex officio members serve a two-year term and can serve consecutive terms at the discretion of the MnDOT Commissioner. Ex officio members are expected to annually attend at least 80% of the STAC meetings, or 5 of the 6 planned meetings each year. Ex officio members will participate in all STAC activities but do not vote on formal recommendations.

Work Groups

The STAC will establish work groups to perform work outside of the bi-monthly STAC meetings, and incorporate feedback from non-members, including technical experts and stakeholders. Any work done in a work group must be approved by the full STAC to be incorporated into the annual report.

Work groups are supported by MnDOT staff and must have a STAC member lead or co-leads. Participation should generally be limited to 10 people or less and can include external technical experts and stakeholders.

Staffing and support

The MnDOT Office of Sustainability and Public Health provides direction, staffing, and logistical support for the STAC which includes managing scheduling and meeting logistics, providing regular communications to the STAC, and helping prepare the annual report. MnDOT staff provide similar support for work groups but some additional resources from work group members, or others, may also be needed.

Meetings and meeting materials access

Meetings are scheduled approximately every two months based on the availability of the MnDOT Commissioner, MnDOT staff, members and ex officio members, and presenters, if applicable. Members may occasionally need to do preparatory work before the meetings and will be notified in advance if this is necessary.

Meetings are announced and agendas will be shared with members and ex officio members via email at least one week before the meeting. Meeting materials, including agendas and meeting notes, will also be posted on the MnDOT Sustainability and Public Health website.

Alternates

Members are allowed and encouraged to send a substitute, or alternate, to join when members are unable to attend. Alternates are not able to participate in decisions about formal recommendations.

Meeting notes

MnDOT staff provide draft meetings notes for review following each meeting. Comments made by STAC members and ex officio members during the meeting will not be attributed to individuals without permission. Members and ex officio members will have one week to comment before notes are posted on the MnDOT Sustainability and Public Health website.

Work groups

Work group members provide knowledge and expertise by participating in meetings and/or by commenting on meeting notes and recommendations. Work group participants are asked to sign in at meetings. Work group comments may be aggregated and not attributed to any individual.

Public comment period

Public input and participation is encouraged. Each meeting shall include a period for public comment so that non-members can provide input on topic(s) discussed during that meeting.

Communication

MnDOT staff support meeting logistics, planning, and communications for all STAC meetings. MnDOT will provide similar support for work groups.

Meeting Process

FACILITATION. Meetings are facilitated by MnDOT and normally last two hours. Meetings will end on time and with a clear understanding of assignments and next steps. Extending meeting time is not encouraged and requires consent of a majority of members in attendance using a show of hands or by voice, if member attending virtually.

TIMELINESS. Participants strive to meet the deadlines for giving feedback and other participation.

RESPECTFUL COMMUNICATION. Participants recognize that divergent ideas ensure robust recommendations and agree to listen respectfully to all opinions. If they choose, the group may develop other meeting guidelines to facilitate communication.

NATURE OF RECOMMENDATIONS. Recommendations focus on helping Minnesota achieve goals to reduce emissions and energy use while maximizing benefits to all Minnesotans.

QUOREM. At least 12 members or ex officio members must be present to make final decisions and/or recommendations.

FORMAL RECOMMENDATIONS. Formal recommendations will generally be made by a consensus of members who attend the meeting.

OPEN MEETINGS. STAC meetings are open to the public and a short time will be allotted at the end each meeting for public comment. Work group meetings are also open to the public and people not on the work group may attend work group meetings. Depending on timing and number of participants, and in consultation with the work group lead/co-lead, meeting facilitators may provide an opportunity for members of the public to address the work group.

“BIKE RACK.” Items raised for discussion but not on the agenda may be listed for discussion another time.

RECORD. The facilitator will keep a record of meeting attendees and notes as outlined above. Comments from members will not be attributed without permission and there will be no verbatim record (“minutes”) of meetings.

Desired Outcomes

- Clear consensus-based recommendations from the STAC to MnDOT.
- Work group members participate in a meaningful way to develop recommendations.
- Recommendations help MnDOT reduce energy and emissions from the transportation sector and promote sustainable transportation themes including safety, equity, and economic development.
- Recommendations consider immediate needs and longer-term planning for MnDOT and the state transportation system.